

COLONIAL POSTAGE.

RETURN to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 15 February 1853;—for,

“COPIES of CORRESPONDENCE between Sir John Pakington and the Postmaster-General, in the Year 1852, in reference to a REDUCTION in the RATES of COLONIAL POSTAGE.”

Colonial Office, Downing-street, }
8 March 1853. }

FREDERICK PEEL.

— No. 1. —

COPY of a LETTER from *H. Merivale*, Esq. to Lieutenant-Colonel *Maberly*.

Sir,

Downing-street, 21 September 1852.

No. 1.

I AM directed by Secretary Sir John Pakington to acquaint you, for the information of the Postmaster-general, that he has received numerous applications, both from the colonies and from this country, praying that the benefits of a cheap and uniform postage may be extended to colonial communication.

H. Merivale, Esq.
to Lieut.-Colonel
Maberly,
21 Sept. 1852.

I am desired to inform you, that Sir John Pakington concurs with the petitioners as to the advantages which would result from the concession, and that he is favourably disposed to it, if the arrangement can be effected without serious difficulty; and I am to request that you will move the Earl of Hardwicke to favour Sir John Pakington with his opinion on the subject.

I am also directed to acquaint you, that owing to the large and increasing amount of emigration to the British colonies, and to the desire of persons who prosper there to send home money in order to assist their relations to follow them from this country, the want has grown up of an opportunity for numerous small remittances from the colonies. From North America they are made to a very large amount indeed, which was estimated at more than 1,000,000 *l.* sterling in the past year, through the intervention of private firms; but those firms complain much of the trouble and responsibility which they involve, and in some cases where houses of inferior respectability may be employed, the poor are liable to be defrauded of the benefit intended for them. There can be no doubt that the practice on the part of persons who have improved their condition by emigration, of sending home money to enable their friends to follow them, is highly laudable, and that it is deserving of encouragement both in a moral and social point of view. In Australia, however, the habit has not yet become nearly so general as in North America, and it is not improbable that, to some considerable extent, it is checked by the want of convenient and readily intelligible means of sending home the requisite funds.

Under these circumstances, the question has been proposed, whether it might not be possible to extend to colonial correspondence the system of making payments by Post-office Orders, which has been so successful in this country; and I am to request that you will bring the subject, with the foregoing statement, under the notice of the Earl of Hardwicke, and will inform me whether the suggestion appears to his Lordship one which could be entertained, and rendered fit for practical adoption. If this result could be secured, Sir John Pakington believes it would be a great boon to the colonies and to the humbler classes in this country.

I have, &c.
(signed) *H. Merivale*.

— No. 2. —

COPY of a LETTER from *J. Tilley, Esq.* to *H. Merivale, Esq.*

No. 2.
J. Tilley, Esq. to
H. Merivale, Esq.
 8 October 1852.

Sir,
 THE Postmaster-general has had under consideration your letter of the 21st ultimo, and with reference to that portion of it which relates to the proposed extension of a cheap and uniform postage to letters transmitted between the United Kingdom and the several British colonies, I am directed by his Lordship to transmit to you, for the information of Sir John Pakington, the enclosed copy of a letter which he addressed to the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury on this subject in April last, with a copy of the reply of their Lordships; and I have to state, that the Postmaster-general will be glad to know whether the measure proposed in this correspondence is such as Sir John Pakington has in view. If so, the Postmaster-general will be prepared to renew his application to the Treasury on this subject.

H. Merivale, Esq.
 &c. &c. &c.

I have, &c.
 (signed) *J. Tilley,*
 Assistant Secretary.

Enclosure in No. 2.

Encl. in No. 2.

TO the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury.

My Lords,

My predecessor, in a letter dated the 9th September 1850, brought under the consideration of your Lordships' Board, the importance of establishing uniform rates of postage upon letters, newspapers, books, and Parliamentary Proceedings, transmitted either by packet or private ship between the United Kingdom and all British colonies, and of combining in such uniform rates the total charge, imperial and colonial, to destination, by which means it was proposed to afford to the public the option of paying the whole of the postage (as regards letters), in advance, either in this country or in the colony, or of forwarding the letters unpaid.

As a preliminary measure, letters were addressed by the Treasury to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and to the Secretary of the India Board, acquainting them with the proposition which had been made by the Postmaster-general, and requesting that the necessary information, relative to the rates charged in the several colonies, and in the East Indies, on letters, &c., might be furnished.

The required information has, up to the present time, been received from Heligoland, the Cape of Good Hope, Ceylon, Labuan, South Australia, Van Diemen's Land, New South Wales, St. Helena and Sierra Leone, and although there remain several colonies from which no reports have yet been received, there nevertheless appears sufficient information to serve as the basis of a general measure for the Crown colonies, leaving the East Indies to be dealt with when the requisite particulars are supplied.

The information gathered from the reports made by the several colonies, confirms the impression of my predecessor, that, in no other instance than that of Heligoland (which was proposed to be exempted from the arrangement in respect to the amount of its rate), the establishment of a shilling rate, would raise the present total charge, while there are comparatively but few cases in which such arrangement would materially lower the charge.

The most striking of these cases, is that of Ceylon, where it appears that, even upon the letters conveyed direct from this country by British contract packets, and consequently without any expense to the colonial government, a sea rate of 1s. is nevertheless added at the colonial post-office, which just doubles the cost to the public, thus raising a great obstacle to correspondence, and injuring the home revenue. A state of things showing the necessity for some such arrangement as that proposed by my predecessor.

There appears every reason, therefore, for carrying out the measure recommended by the Marquess of Clanricarde's letter of the 9th September 1850, at least so far as relates to the Crown colonies; immediate effect being given to the measure in all colonies whose postal arrangements are under my control, and negotiations being forthwith commenced as regards the others.

The original proposition consisted in fixing the uniform rate of postage at the amount already charged in most cases, viz., 1s. the half-ounce, with the present scale of advance, the same to free the letter to its place of destination, and to be pre-paid or not, at the option of the sender. Of this shilling it was proposed, that, as in the case of Canada, 2d. should be assigned to the colonial post-office as its inland rate, the remaining 10d. being assigned to the British office as its inland rate and sea postage combined.

Of course to this uniform rate, addition would have to be made, as at present, when the letter should be subjected to a foreign transit postage, as in the case of letters to the East Indies *via* Marseilles, and to Canada *via* the United States.

It would remain to deal with the division of the rate on letters conveyed by ship, as also with newspapers and Parliamentary Proceedings.

Where letters are conveyed by ship, the colony is of course entitled to a larger share of the

the postage, and I should recommend that the 1s. rate be equally divided between the Home Government and the colony, an arrangement somewhat more favourable to the colonies than that which now exists.

Newspapers are conveyed at rates which vary considerably. In many cases they pass entirely free of charge; in others, a charge (generally of 1d. each) is made either in this country or in the colony; but I am not aware of any case in which a newspaper is charged in both. In this country the rule is to charge nothing if the newspaper be carried by packet, and 1d. if by private ship. In the colonies the practice is exceedingly variable.

The adoption of a uniform rule, therefore, implies either the imposing of a rate in those cases where newspapers go free, or the extension of free conveyance to those newspapers which are now charged, an alternative which would not only cause some loss to the revenue, but would augment an inconvenience already seriously felt by this department.

Parliamentary Proceedings it is very desirable, for the sake of simplicity, to place on the same footing as other books; as, however, this would, in many cases, involve an increase in the present rates (generally from 1d., though in a few cases from 2d. per quarter-pound, to 6d. per half-pound), this change, as well as the establishment of a rate on all newspapers, would tend to produce dissatisfaction, which I fear would scarcely be allayed by the very moderate and exceptional reduction implied in the establishment of a uniform letter rate of 1s.

If, however, the interests of the revenue should be found to admit of a decided reduction in the general rate, all minor dissatisfaction would probably disappear amidst the gratification arising from so popular a measure.

Considering the vast importance of strengthening the ties between the colonies and the mother country, I am of opinion that some revenue may wisely be sacrificed, or at least risked, for the purpose of multiplying correspondence and giving to the colonies a valuable and acceptable privilege.

Impressed with the importance of these views, I submit, for the consideration of your Lordships, without at present suggesting any change in the inter-colonial postage, the propriety of lowering the present postal charges between the mother country and the Crown colonies to a uniform rate of 6d. to be divided, as regards colonies the ports of which are not under my control, in the same proportions as originally proposed in regard to the 1s. rate; thus giving 5d. or 3d. to the mother country and 1d. or 3d. to the colony, according as the letter is conveyed by packet or private ship, and the course of proceeding being in all other respects the same as recommended above.

With so large a reduction on letters, I should have no hesitation in recommending that Parliamentary Proceedings should be placed on the same footing as other books, and that a uniform rate of 1d. (also to be paid in advance) should be established on newspapers, the same freeing them to their destination either way, and the postage being retained by whichever party collects it.

Under this combined arrangement, Heligoland would of course be no longer (as formerly proposed) an exception to the general rule; and, what is more important, the scale for letters would be the same (substituting ounces for pounds) as that recently adopted for books.

Supposing the rates to be thus reduced, I think a corresponding reduction should take place in the gratuities payable to the masters of private ships; and I propose that the present payment of 2d. per letter and 1d. per newspaper be reduced by one-half. I would suggest also a proportionate reduction in the allowance to the Custom-house officers for letters landed at Grave-end, viz. from 1½d. to ¾d. per letter, as also in the allowance to boatmen for bringing ship-letters ashore in the Channel, and in any other allowances now made in respect of ship-letters.

There are no exact data for ascertaining the amount of revenue which would be risked by either of the uniform rates proposed, but so far as can be judged from a rough estimate founded on the state of things in 1848, it would be about 10,000*l.* per annum in case of the 1s. rate being fixed, and about 50,000*l.* per annum in the case of the 6d. rate being determined on, omitting the Government postage in both cases. Judging, however, by past experience, there can be little doubt that the greater part of any deficit that might arise would, in a few years, be made up by increase in the number of letters. Considering this, and bearing in mind that the obligation to consult certain of the Colonial Legislatures necessitates a gradual introduction of the measure, I think it probable that the loss of revenue in any one year will not exceed 20,000*l.*

Having thus fully stated to your Lordships my views on this subject, I beg to leave it to your favourable consideration.

General Post-Office, 27 April 1852.

I have, &c.
(signed) *Hardwicke.*

My Lord,

Treasury Chambers, 29 May 1852.

I HAVE laid before the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury your Lordship's letter of the 27th ultimo, recommending a reduced uniform rate of postage to the British Colonies, and am directed by their Lordships to acquaint you, that my Lords do not feel warranted at present in sanctioning an arrangement for a uniform reduced rate of postage to the British Colonies, which, however desirable, would involve a considerable loss of revenue.

I have, &c.
The Postmaster-General, &c. &c. &c.
204.

(signed) *Geo. A. Hamilton.*

— No. 3. —

COPY of a LETTER from *H. Merivale*, Esq. to *J. Tilley*, Esq.

No. 3.
H. Merivale, Esq.
 to *J. Tilley*, Esq.
 8 November 1852.

Sir,

Downing-street, 8 November 1852.

I AM directed by Secretary Sir John Pakington to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 8th ultimo, in which, with reference to Mr. Merivale's letter of the 21st of September, you transmit the copies of a correspondence which had already passed with the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury on the subject to which the Postmaster-general's attention has since been drawn by Sir John Pakington, of a cheap and uniform postage to the colonies.

I am desirous to acquaint you, for the information of the Postmaster-general, that Sir John Pakington is satisfied that the scheme proposed in the Earl of Hardwicke's letter to the Treasury, dated the 27th of April last, by which a general sixpenny rate would be established for all letters under half an ounce sent to the British colonies, with the requisite dependent arrangements as to the transmission of Parliamentary Proceedings and newspapers, would be a most valuable boon to Her Majesty's colonial subjects, and to all in this country who have private or commercial relations with the colonies, and that Sir John Pakington would be very glad if the Postmaster-general should be able again to bring the proposal before the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, in such a manner as may lead to its favourable reconsideration.

I have, &c.

(signed) *H. Merivale*.

 COLONIAL POSTAGE.

COPIES of CORRESPONDENCE between Sir John Pakington and the Postmaster-General, in the Year 1852, in reference to a Reduction in the RATES of COLONIAL POSTAGE.

(Mr. Moffatt.)

Ordered, by the House of Commons, to be Printed,
 8 March 1853.

204.

Under 1 oz.